

STATEMENT ON ACCESSIBILITY

INTRODUCTION

An educated citizenry is essential to the well-being of society. It is in the national interest, therefore, to ensure that all residents who wish to further their education and who are capable of benefitting academically from university study have an opportunity to do so. Underlying this assertion is the conviction that the primary goal of higher education is to promote fundamental human values which include the pursuit of knowledge, equality of opportunity, a superior quality of life and increased freedom for both the individual and society.

One indicator of accessibility is participation rates. These rates may be defined by reference to the general population or to specific groups within the general population. This statement recognizes both references. Current rates of participation vary from region to region and among groups within society. The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada encourages the provision of equal postsecondary opportunities to all Canadians in all parts of the country.

The many factors that affect accessibility and participation rates may be grouped into three categories; availability, eligibility and motivation. Availability is dependent upon the numbers, location and capacity of institutions of higher education, the educational programs offered and the availability of adequate financial resources. Eligibility is determined by success in prior schooling, the application of formal admissions criteria established by the universities and university judgements of an individual's potential to benefit academically from study at the university level. Motivation is determined by personal expectations and characteristics and by the home and community environments.

PRINCIPLES

The AUCC believes:

1. that opportunities for university study should be available to all citizens and permanent residents of Canada who are capable of benefitting academically from such study;

2. that it is desirable to increase university participation rates, in general and, in particular, in those regions of the country where these rates are below the national average;
3. that access for all who are capable of benefitting academically does not necessarily mean that there will be a place for all such applicants in the program and/or university of his/her choice but that when universities must limit enrolments, the impact of such actions on accessibility should be taken into consideration;
4. that, since maintenance of program quality is paramount, university enrolment decisions should be based on the availability of resources and not just on the number of qualified applicants;
5. that part-time study opportunities significantly enhance access to universities and should be expanded;
6. that distance education is an important means of increasing access to university study and should be encouraged as long as program quality can be maintained;
7. that it is important to provide appropriate facilities for disabled students who are capable of benefitting from university studies;
8. that it is important to accommodate socio-economically disadvantaged students who are capable of benefitting from university studies;
9. that it is important that all potential university students be provided with information and counselling to ensure that they are adequately informed about university requirements, programs and activities and about financial assistance available to them;
10. that governments and others should provide adequate financial aid in order that no student is prevented from attending university by lack of financial means;
11. that, because mobility of students among universities and among provinces is important to Canadian society, student aid schemes should contain no provisions that inhibit mobility and, moreover, that universities should give appropriate recognition for course credits obtained at other Canadian universities so that a student is not unreasonably restricted in completing university studies; and
12. that adequate funding is essential to accessibility and where capacity is insufficient or quality is threatened, accessibility may be reduced.

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